1. **If the project received funding for broadband planning, please describe progress made against all goals, objectives, and milestones detailed in the approved project plan. Be sure to include a description of each major activity/milestone that you plan to complete and your current status. (Answer below.)**

The Nebraska Information Technology Commission Community Council (NITC), University of Nebraska - Lincoln (UNL), Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED) and the AIM Institute are cooperatively leading the effort to address the broadband planning needs of Nebraska's communities. UNL is the fiscal agent for the planning part of the grant.

A number of activities were identified in the initial grant to identify barriers to the adoption of broadband and IT services, creating and facilitating local technology planning teams, and collaborating with broadband service providers to encourage broadband deployment and use. In the supplemental grant, activities were focused around three projects: capacity building, technical assistance and local planning. Following the NITA guidance and recent NTIA Webinar recommendation, the quarterly report will focus on the three project areas.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Internet Connectivity and Use in Nebraska: A Household Survey

Nebraskans were surveyed about their computer and Internet usage, challenges and desires for the future through a mail survey conducted in February and March 2010 by UNL. The survey mailed to 6,600 Nebraskans in February 2010 utilized the Dillman Total Design Method to achieve a 47% response rate. The household names were obtained from a marketing firm. The survey included four separate mailings to the households using the State of Nebraska Public Service Commission letterhead.

The first report on Internet Connectivity and Use in Nebraska was released in June 2010. The report will be available at broadband.ne.gov by Quarter 2 2011. The report includes regional, education, income, age, gender, racial and ethnic group comparisons. Key findings identified include the following example:

> *Approximately four out of every five households (81%) in Nebraska has internet service. However, older persons, persons with lower household incomes, persons with lower education levels, households without children, and households in the nonmetropolitan areas of the state are the groups less likely to have Internet service in their home.*

The development of the questionnaire began in October 2009 and was finalized shortly after the broadband grant was awarded in January. Questions from the Pew Foundation and other national telecommunication surveys were used in order to compare results. A copy of the survey is attached.

2nd Quarter 2011 Status Update: During quarter 2, survey results specific to region were shared at forums. Cornhusker Economics article, http://agecon.unl.edu/Cornhuskereconomics, on July 6 entitled Use Of and Satisfaction with Home Broadband Service by Business Ownership. One excerpt from the article states, "Given that farmers and ranchers are less likely than business owners to have broadband service, it comes as no surprise that they are less likely to express satisfaction with the speed of their Internet service. Less than half (48%) of farmers/ranchers are satisfied with the speed of their service, compared to 67 percent of business owners and 57 percent of persons owning both a farm/ranch and other type of business."

Business Survey

Currently, 27 communities are now conducting additional business surveys in communities/regions using the Department of Economic Development Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Program. The BR&E survey asks over 10 specific questions related to technology and broadband utilization. An additional survey will be sent to businesses in 2011 to gather more specific data.

Businesses will be surveyed through DED's Business Retention and Expansion program to identify the strengths and challenges they face in utilizing technology. Currently over 400 key businesses are surveyed annually by the Department of Economic Development Statewide. To develop the statewide plan, over 1000 businesses will be included in the database as communities and regions have the capability to gather information from all types of businesses including retail, health care and services. The BR&E survey asks over 10 specific questions related to technology and broadband utilization. Additional questions will be developed that relate specifically to future opportunities. The data will be pulled together and themes will be developed.

> *2nd Quarter 2011 Status Update*: Business Surveys. Businesses continued to be surveyed using DED's BR&E program. Data is being collected across the state. Sixteen communities currently hold a licenses to input data in eSynchronist; additional licenses will be made available in 3Q 2011. A separate broadband survey was implemented in 2Q 2011.

Inventory of Broadband and Digital Literacy Programs.

In order to identify potential partners and to avoid duplication of efforts, an inventory of broadband and digital literacy programs will be conducted. Results will be shared with project partners, regional teams and be available on the broadband portal.

> *2nd Quarter 2011 Status Update*. The inventory will begin in Quarter 2 with the hiring of the Communication Specialist in August 2011.

Focused Surveys.

Focused surveys in regions where there are large numbers of non-adopters will help to better understand how to increase broadband adoption. The surveys will be conducted in specific counties, regions and in some parts of metropolitan areas where usage

appears to be lower and will provide these areas with data specific to them that can be used to develop a plan that addresses their future needs. The surveys will also create local benchmark data that will help determine if broadband adoption increases in these areas over time.

> *2nd Quarter 2011 Status Update.* Determined to hold off on focused surveys until the supplemental funding is in place. In addition, the focused surveys will be determined in conjunction with the regional groups. The regional groups have just begun to meet.

Government and Economic Developer Survey. To gather information on access, adoption, usage, and technical assistance needs of all county and community governments, chambers of commerce, and for economic developers, a survey (web-based where feasible) of all entities will be conducted. This information will support the development of regional and community technology plans and will be used to develop targeted technical assistance for local governments and economic developers.

> *2nd Quarter 2011 Status Update*. Begin development of surveys in Quarter 3, 2011.

Follow-up Statewide Household Survey. A follow-up survey of Nebraska households will be conducted in the Spring of 2015 (Year 5 of grant) to document changes in Internet and broadband use since the 2010 survey (which was funded in the original proposal). Regions that were originally identified as either unserved or underserved in the initial survey will be over-sampled in this follow-up survey.   This data will determine program success.

> 2nd Quarter 2011 Status Update. Survey planned for Quarter 2 2014.

Creating Broadband Plan/Administrative – To meet the objectives of the grant, the broadband planning oversight team meets on a bi-monthly basis. The initial meetings, beginning in September 2009, focused on the development of the household survey questions which allowed for the survey to be distributed in February 2010. The report findings were released in June 2010. Members of the planning oversight team continue to participate in the NTIA informational webinars, present findings at meetings regarding the planning process and communicate regularly with the Public Service Commission (PSC) on the project. There are funds in the grant to hire a project manager/coordinator to assist the planning team in creating a statewide plan. During the 2nd Quarter 2011, an individual will be hired to assist planning team in these efforts.

> *2nd Quarter 2011 Status Update*: A communications specialist position was advertised the end of May 2011. Over 50 applicants responded and the final candidate accepted in July 2011 and will begin in August. Steering team members have regularly updated the Public Service Commission. Beginning in Quarter 3, the steering team will begin to meet quarterly with the Public Service Commission staff providing updates and creating opportunity to share input. In addition, brief quarterly reports will be presented to the commissioners.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Three cross-training efforts were identified in the Supplemental Application to address broadband adoption and utilization. These efforts outlined below are the Statewide Conference, Regional Workshops and Webinars.

Statewide Conference. The statewide conference will be focused on broadband adoption and utilization will bring together many industries including those working in economic development, telecommunications industry, education, state government, and local government personnel.

> *2nd Quarter 2011 Status Update*: The AIM Institute is providing leadership in this effort and the planning is moving forward. During this quarter:

- Confirmed dates and location for the statewide conference
- Completed initial set-up of conference planning activities with AIM conference management team
- Identified potential speakers and targeted market sectors for invitation
- Developed initial program design

Regional Workshops. Regional workshops will be held to address specific issues related to an area on broadband adoption and utilization.

> 1st *Quarter 2011 Status Update: Regional workshops will begin 2012.*

Webinars. Up to four webinars will be held each year to address broadband adoption and utilization. Topics may include how to set up community planning groups to sharing results of the various data collections, processes and best practices.

> *2nd Quarter 2011 Status Update*: Webinars will focus on creating demand/opportunity for broadband. The first webinar will be held in October 2011. Initial topics have been explored that include:

- Panel discussions on how businesses are using Broadband. Topics could include teleconferencing/video conferring; connecting to people globally; working remotely, the management and oversight.
- Community focused – looking at successful examples such as South Sioux City, Falls City, Cambridge or others. Creating hot spots in a community.
- *Content specific* such as health information.
- *Best practices in the Future* (this could be under business/community or separate if general)

Best Practice Videos. One way to expand broadband adoption across Nebraska is to learn from communities, businesses and other organizations who are the early adopters and "get it." This project initiative will identify at least 20 examples of best practices throughout Nebraska and conduct video interviews with key players. These individuals will be asked to describe the essential elements of their success. Each interview will be edited and compiled onto the broadband portal resource from which other communities can learn.

> *2nd Quarter 2011 Status Update*: Began development of criteria for selection of candidates to feature in videos.

- Developed preliminary list of candidates to feature in videos, made initial contacts
- Confirmed availability of videographer and video project manager to create videos

Entrepreneur Acceleration System (EDAS). Providing technical assistance to local business leaders on supporting entrepreneurs through the use of broadband technologies. Broadband access, adoption and usage are critical applications for Nebraska entrepreneurs to increase market availability. Using technology to create a share of the market base is a new way of doing economic development. Technology applications will provide a tool for local services and suppliers to access the world market allowing for global expansion of access to clients and customers. A part of the EDAS focus will be used to address how broadband can help strengthen entrepreneurs in the State. This project has the potential to be a model for other states as they develop entrepreneurs and the impact of broadband.

> *2nd Quarter 2011 Status Update*: · Entrepreneur Development and Acceleration System (EDAS). More than 25 mentors were selected for the EDAS program; 124 companies and over 550 individuals are participating in the program. Participating companies completed the five core workshops led by Gallup in 1Q and 2Q 2011. Companies are also provided one on one support from a Gallup certified mentor and participated in self-paced activities administered online throughout program. Nearly 200 broadband surveys were collected from EDAS participants in 2Q 2011. Anticipate analysis of surveys in 3Q 2011.

Technical Assistance Expertise. The focus of this effort will be to provide technical assistance in the area of business and entrepreneurism to chambers of commerce, economic developers, and local and county stakeholders statewide and regionally to increase broadband adoption.

> *2nd Quarter 2011 Status Update*: Technical assistance needs will be identified throughout data collection and planning process. Technical assistance will begin during 2012 and will be based on opportunities identified by regional groups and steering team.

Broadband Portal Development - Develop a central broadband portal which will serve as a source of information on broadband efforts in Nebraska and technical assistance materials.

> *2nd Quarter 2011 Status Update*: The site map has been reviewed and updated during the last three months and content is beginning to be developed. The official site has been launched at http://broadband.nebraska.gov. A logo was created as part of the website development – "Engaging People, Linking the World".

LOCAL AND REGIONAL PLANNING

Regional Planning Teams. Regional planning teams will be formed to conduct regional assessments, prioritize opportunities, and develop strategies. Regional coaches will assist planning teams in conducting the development of plans. Each of the regions will hold a

regional forum. .   The forums will be conducted to present broadband mapping and mail survey results, to solicit feedback, and to kick off regional planning efforts. Project partners will work with regional planning teams to host forums to present broadband mapping data and mail survey results, to solicit feedback, and to kick off regional planning efforts.

2nd Quarter 2011 Status Update: The kick-off regional forums were completed during Quarter 2. Over 300 participants attended the forums representing local telephone companies, Internet service providers, education, municipalities, agri-business, healthcare, economic development, industry and consumers. Participants engaged in conversations about broadband. The themes of accessibility, affordability and education were highlighted in each of the regions. Availability was also a concern addressed in a number of the regions.

Of these 300, around 80 initially indicated a willingness to serve on the planning teams. Planning team members represent a broad area of interest and additional individuals are being identified to fill any potential gaps in geography or interest area. The planning teams will use a recently updated workbook called, Engaging People. Linking the World: Broadband Planning Workbook. The workbook is a revised version of the Building Information Age Communities: Community Information Technology Planning Workbook. The original workbook was written by Anne Byers and cooperatively developed by the Community Council of the Nebraska Information Technology Commission and the University of Nebraska's Technologies Across Nebraska initiative. A downloadable version is available at "http://broadband.nebraska.gov."

In May a Cornhusker Economics article highlighted the forums and efforts entitled, "**Be A Part of the Plan - Engaging People - Linking the World".** The article can be found at http://agecon.unl.edu/Cornhuskereconomics.

Eight extension educators are working with the regions at this stage. Each of the regions are at varying stages of identifying additional planning team members and beginning to holding meetings. The following highlights each of the regions activities (including the regional forums) during quarter 2.

- **Northeast Regional Planning Team –** The kick off forum was held on March 23 and approximately44 people attended the first regional broadband forum held mid-March in Norfolk. During June, the first planning meeting was held and participants were engaged in this four hour, face-to-face meeting.. The planning team identified additional members to be involved and had specific conversations about broadband in general. Ground rules were set off and many spin off ideas were discussed. Additional data is going to be gathered with assistance from the service providers looking at serviceable versus non-serviceable areas. The next planning meeting will be in held in September or October.

- **Western Nebraska Regional Forum** – The initial forum held in Scottsbluff had 55 participants. . Several follow-up questions from the forum were addressed.

Planning is underway to find people willing to serve on the planning team representing a larger geographic area and bringing more diversity to the entities/populations represented. Conversations have continued with the Western Nebraska Development Network. The WNDN is planning a regional event and broadband will be one of the topics.

- **North Central Regional Forum** - The initial forum was held in Valentine. Additional members are being identified and the initial planning committee will be held in Quarter 3.

- **New Frontier Regional Forum** - April 6 - North Platte. Over 40 participants attended the initial forum. The North Platte forum was widely attended by people in the region. The local press – tv, radio and newspaper were each in attendance and encouraging the importance of broadband. Efforts are being made to identify additional planning team members and hold the initial meeting. The conversation has continued at with the New Frontier regional network.

- **Southwest Regional Forum** – Over 40 participants attended in McCook, Nebraska. The opportunities for broadband including training & education, sell the area and attract youth. Communities in this region were more focused on adoption then unserved as many communities have high speed internet available. Local providers in this region have enhanced service. Opportunities to increase included education.

- **Southeast** –Nearly 40 participants attended the broadband session in Lincoln Nebraska. At the forum, many representatives throughout federal and government participated. Conversations included the importance of helping small businesses understand the "Cloud"; the challenges in providing broadband to rural and urban and dollars available. In this region, regular marketing to identify additional participants through the regional groups and engagement by attending regional meetings and emails have occurred. The follow-up planning meeting is being held in July where participants will review the themes identified in regional broadband forums and begin to discuss the approach.

- **Central** – The 30 participants represented many of the counties in the central region. Representatives from the community colleges and the University of Nebraska-Kearney were actively engaged. A follow-up meeting to the form is being held in July. Conversations at the initial forum included the opportunities to increase adoption and utilization. Ideas included sharing best practices and the importance of highlighting the importance of broadband to non-users from a standpoint of what it can do for me.

- **Omaha Metro**–The Omaha Metro Broadband Regional Forum was held April 28, 2011. The location was the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce offices in downtown Omaha. All the partners for the grant were represented; a total of 30

attendees were present. After background information was presented to the participants the attendees were divided into four small groups. The discussion was fruitful. While high speed internet is widely available in Omaha, participants just outside of the city limits do not have access available. This was later confirmed when the FCC held a hearing in Omaha. Currently the educator is evaluating the responses and will move forward with a team to assist in the plan for broadband usage in the metro area.

***Community Planning - North/South Omaha*.** North and south Omaha were identified as underserved regions/areas through the survey of Nebraska households. The AIM Institute will be leading efforts in Omaha to address broadband adoption and utilization.

> *2nd Quarter 2011 Status Update*: Identified preliminary list of community partners to engage in developing and implementing outreach efforts.

Community Planning - Cultural and Unserved Communities.   We will form additional community or local planning teams in regions/areas identified as underserved through the survey of Nebraska households and broadband mapping data. As part of the planning process, additional data will be collected (identified in the building capacity section) and focus groups will be held. Coaches with specific knowledge of these regional areas will be added to work specifically with these areas to develop plans relevant to their situation regarding broadband adoption and availability.

> *2nd Quarter 2011 Status Update*: The cultural coach and steering team members met with members of the Winnebago Tribe, Santee and Omaha to begin collaboration on the project. Community meetings will be in held during the fall of 2011. In addition, meetings have been held with other partners that are working with the tribes on technology concerns.

Focus Groups. Seven to 10 focus groups will be held with anchor institutions and utility providers as well as populations with low usage rates to gain understanding into the barriers to broadband adoption and utilization from their perspective.   Focus groups will also be held with businesses including farmers and ranchers.

> *2nd Quarter 2011 Status Update*: Initial focus groups have been identified. The first focus groups will be held in 3rd quarter 2011.

Community Sector Discussions.   Community Sector discussions will be held to further advance adoption of technology in specific industries such as business and entrepreneurs, chambers of commerce, agriculture and the health industry**.** The focus of each discussion will be to benchmark technology use across the specific sectors, set goals for improved technology, and develop a plan to achieve goals.

> *2nd Quarter 2011 Status Update*: The community sector discussions will begin in 2012 and conducted by UNL.

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